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Title: Mr. Speaker made references to the passing away of Kumari Nirmala Deshpande, noted Gandhian and sitting Member of Rajya Sabha.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, it is with profound sorrow, that I rise today to make a reference to the passing away of the widely revered Gandhian and a sitting Member of Rajya Sabha, Kumari Nirmala Deshpande.

Kumari Nirmala Deshpande, who was affectionately called 'Didi', dedicated more than sixty years of her life working relentlessly for promotion of communal harmony and in self-less service for women, tribals and the underÂprivileged. Also known *'Manaskanya'* of Acharaya Vinobha Bhave, Nirmalaji joined the Bhoodan Land Reform Movement in 1952 and thus began her tryst with social-service.

Kumari Nirmala Deshpande was first nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1997 and again in 2004. She was a Member of various Parliamentary Committees during her tenure. She was also a Member of the Parliamentary Forum on Children. She was the National President, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Chairperson, Association of Peoples of Asia, Bapu Sadbhavana and Shiksha Trust and India-Pakistan Forum of Parliamentarians. She was also Member of the National Integration Council and Central Advisory Board of Education.

Kumari Nirmala Deshpande was the author of various novels, plays, travelogues and commentaries in Hindi and Marathi.

Kumari Nirmala Deshpande had widely traveled in connection with her efforts to promote peace and Gandhian values. Her efforts in bringing peace and tranquility in the Indian sub-continent were widely appreciated. She was also the recipient of various awards and honours including the nation's second highest civilian award the 'Padma Vibhushan.'

Kumari Nirmala Deshpande was one of those rare personalities who dedicated their whole life in pursuit of self-less social service, and for promoting communal amity. Her simple life, indefatigable zeal, energy and enthusiasm endeared her to all those who came in association with her. Her life which exemplified 'simple living and high thinking' helped in her efforts to reaffirm the everlasting values of Gandhian thought and philosophy.

The passing away of Kumari Nirmala Deshpande, on 1 May, 2008 at New Delhi at the age of 79 years has created a void which would be difficult to fill.

I am sure the House would join me in conveying condolences to the bereaved family.

Members may stand in silence for a short while in the memory of the departed.

11.02 hrs.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned till 2.00 pm.

11.03 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Fourteen of the Clock.

14.00 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled at Fourteen of the Clock.

(Mr. Speaker *in the Chair*)